

Message Text

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43

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FM AMCONSUL KADUNA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2827

INFO AMCONSUL IBADAN

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

C O N F I D E N T I A L KADUNA 0647

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, NI

SUBJECT: PRESS ROLE

1. SUMMARY SENIOR REPRESENTATIVES OF DAILY TIMES, KADUNA AND NEW NIGERIAN HAVE DECLARED IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION CLEAR INTENTION THEIR NEWSPAPERS TO PURSUE INSTITUTIONAL ROLE OF PRESS AND NOT TO BE DETERRED BY SLIGHTLY VEILED THREATS OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. END SUMMARY

2. NEW NIGERIAN EDITOR TURI MUHAMMADU, WHO WAS IN GERMANY WHEN GOMWALK CASE BROKE, SUPPORTS FULLY MANNER IN WHICH HIS PAPER HANDLED GOMWALK CASE. HE BELIEVES "INNOVATIVE" NIGERIANS WILL FIND ALTERNATIVE MEANS TO BRING CASES OF CORRUPTION TO SURFACE IN FACE OF RESTRICTIVE INTERPRETATION ON USE OF AFFIDAVITS GIVEN BY ADVISORY JUDICIAL COMMITTEE. HE SAID NEW NIGERIAN STANDS BY ITS EDITORIAL OF SEPT 9 (WHICH ASSERTED "PRESS HAS DUTY TO INFORM AND TO EXPOSE PUBLIC OFFICERS WHO BEHAVE WITH IMPROPRIETY" AND THAT "THERE IS NO HALF WAY HOUSE" I.E. IN PRESS FREEDOM) AND WILL PUBLISH ALLEGATIONS WHICH SEEM TO HAVE RESONABLE BASIS OF FACT. WITHOUT EXPRESSING APPROVAL OR DISAPPROVAL, HE FOUND GOWON'S HANDLING OF GOMWALK CASE NOT SURPRISING.

3. DAILY TIMES DISTRICT GM HAS SAID REPEATEDLY HIS NEWSPAPER, CONFIDENTIAL

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UNDER DIRECTION OF JOSE, DOES NOT INTEND TO BUCKLE TO GOVERN-

MENT PRESSURE. HIS ASSERTION GAINS CREDENCE FROM CONTINUED EXTENSIVE COVERAGE BY DAILY TIMES INCLUDING FRONT PAGE COMMENTARY ON SEPT 13, WHICH WAS WRITTEN BY JOSE AND WHICH CALLS FOR COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO UNANSWERED CHARGES IN GOMWALK CASE. "THOUGHT FOR TODAY" FEATURE REGULARLY HAS BEEN QUOTATION RELATING TO FREEDOM AND ROLE OF PRESS. ACCORDING DISTRICT GM DECISION ALREADY TAKEN BY DAILY TIMES TO RENEW CALL FOR COMMISSION OF INQUIRY IF GOWON TAKES NO ACTION IN THAT DIRECTION AFTER HIS RETURN FROM CHINA. HE ALSO CLAIMS BOARD OF DIRECTORS HAS GIVEN JOSE MANDATE TO PAY ALL DAILY TIMES EMPLOYEES ONE YEAR'S SALARY IN EVENT PAPER IS CLOSED DOWN. THIS WOULD SEEM INDICATE SERIOUSNESS MANAGEMENT'S INTENT THAT COUNTRY'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER SHOULD HOLD LINE AND NOT COMPROMISE PRESS FREEDOM BY CAVING IN TO GOVERNMENT PRESSURE.

TRAIL

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